

**BLM Central California Resource Advisory Council**  
**April 8-9, 2011**  
**Nevada City, CA**  
**Meeting notes**

Attendees:

**RAC** – George Armstrong, Jon McQuiston, Suzanne Noble, Mary Gorden, Steve Koretoff, Jim Haagen-Smit (chair), Carl Twisselman, Walt Pachucki, Roger Mitchell, Leigh Marymor, Paul McFarland.

**BLM** – Kathy Hardy, Rick Cooper, Bill Haigh, David Christy.

**Public** – Amy Granat, Crawford Bost, Ken Glaspie, John and Neva Valasek, Reb Monaco, Cathy Haagen-Smit, Hugh Brady, Joanne Hild, Mike Damaso, Joanne Drummond, Izzy Martin, Carrie Monohan, Charlie Alpers, Jamie Beutler.

**APRIL 8**

Bill Haigh, Mother Lode Field Office manager, welcomed attendees and outlined the schedule for the meeting and tour. The Field Tour highlighted abandoned mines and the clean up work being accomplished by the Mother Lode FO. Some of the partners who are collaborating on the mercury abatement joined us including the Sierra Fund and U.S. Geological Survey.

RAC member unanimously voted to retain Jim Haagen-Smit as chair and Steve Koretoff as vice chair. RAC members also voted unanimously to approve the notes from the previous meeting

**STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Kathy Hardy, Central California District manager, gave the state director's report:

- **Leadership Team in Washington/State Office:** Things pretty much unchanged regarding our leadership at the Washington and California levels. Our Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals, Wilma Lewis, has been nominated to a Federal judgeship by the President and will be leaving Interior once confirmed.
- **Budget:** The Federal Government, including BLM, continues to operate under a Continuing Resolution for fiscal year 2011. The current CR expires today, April 8, 2011. A yearlong continuing resolution, a shorter term continuing resolution or an omnibus appropriations bill are all still possibilities at this point.
- **Legislation:** The 112th Congress is well underway. The primary focus of this Congress, so far, has mostly been on budget issues. There are about half a dozen legislative proposals that we are tracking, including one in Central California: Gold Hill-Wakamatsu Preservation Act which would authorize Dept. of Interior/BLM to acquire Gold Hill Ranch in Coloma to preserve it as a site of historical and cultural value.
- **Wild Horse & Burro** - We are moving into the "adoption season" with the number of adoption events picking up throughout the state. In May we have the Extreme Mustang Trail Challenge in Norco, where people can bid on trail trained horses. In addition, we

have horses and burros available at the corrals in Litchfield and Ridgecrest. Currently, we have no funded gathers in FY2011 in California. Our biggest priority for the state is the High Rock Complex in the Surprise FO. Depending on the results of the budget, we hope to gather this area in the fall. We would be removing about a thousand horses from the area and leaving about 230. BLM-California's successful Twin Peaks gather near Susanville last fall has become a Bureau-wide model for public participation and transparency.

- **BLM Priorities:** Even though the 2011 priorities are still dependent on passage of an appropriations act, we know that renewable energy and America's Great Outdoors (including NLCS, youth initiatives and recreation) will dominate the remainder of the fiscal year.
- **State Director's Message** – Most of the pundits in Washington are predicting some tough times ahead as the President seeks ways to reduce the deficit while stimulating growth to generate jobs. BLM-California will share in both – we can expect a lower budget in 2011 and 2012, and we will continue to work hard on siting renewable energy projects that generate jobs and produce American energy. These goals, plus our ongoing portfolio of multiple use programs and projects, will likely keep all of us busy in 2011. Both nationally and locally, the BLM raises more revenue each year for American taxpayers than it spends. In California, the BLM brings in about \$93 million in royalties from oil and gas, \$600,000 in royalties from wind projects and \$12 million from geothermal projects each year. The six solar projects approved last year in the California desert could result in a combined total of nearly \$37 million in annual rent and royalties, once built out.

**Next meeting:** The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for August 26-27, to be hosted by the Bishop Field Office. Bodie Hills, Alabama Hills, off-highway vehicle use, sage grouse, volunteers/partnerships and wildlands were suggested as agenda topics.

## **FIELD OFFICE REPORTS**

### **MOTHER LODGE FIELD OFFICE**

Bill Haigh said abandoned mine lands remediation has been a priority for the office. Tailings were removed at Davis Mill near Nevada City. Other projects include Poison Lake above Lake Camanche, the Longfellow Mill at Groveland and Deer Creek in Nevada City. In addition to working on mercury contamination at Deer Creek, BLM is working with local groups on a hiking trail. The recreation goal is to provide a hiking trail and greenbelt in Nevada City.

Deer Creek has multiple owners and is being used to develop methods to address remediation at larger sites.

Roger Mitchell asked if BLM has installed physical barriers at sites. Bill Haigh said six acres were fenced at Poison Lake.

Steve Koretoff asked if some of the toxins such as arsenic are naturally occurring. Bill Haigh said some are, but others such as mercury were introduced.

Under legislation sponsored by Senator Boxer and Congressman McClintock, the Wakamatsu Colony near Gold Hill may be transferred to BLM. Wakamatsu was founded by Samurai during the Gold Rush as a silk and tea farm.

BLM is holding community planning meetings for Kanaka Valley, a 695-acre parcel near Rescue. The parcel was acquired using Bureau of Reclamation mitigation funds. The main planning issue has been hunting.

Leigh Marymor asked how hunting would affect management. Bill Haigh said there would be no impact on the level of management required. Jim Haagen-Smit asked if there are wild pigs in the area. Bill Haigh said there has been no sign of pigs. Jim Haagen-Smit suggested even if hunting is not allowed, there should be a clause allowing depredation permits. Steve Koretoff asked if there was a history of hunting in the area. Bill Haigh said it previously was private property and hunting was not allowed.

At the last meeting, Bill Haigh reported there was discussion about management of the Auburn State recreation Area. BLM owns about 40 percent of the land there. USBR has agreed to continue funding State Parks to manage the area, so there is no longer talk of a change in management.

Agencies have been working cooperatively through the Amador-Calaveras Consensus group to reduce fuels while creating jobs in the counties. Projects have been done in the West Point, Wilseyville and Glencoe areas. The group was runner-up for a Sierra Business Council partnership award. The consensus group is working to get a Forest Service grant to carry out a fire and forest health project near West Point. BLM also is doing a fuels treatment test over 400 acres at Lily Gap to evaluate the effectiveness of the different treatments.

Carl Twisselman asked if mine tailings are considered hazardous material. Bill Haigh said they often are and require special disposal.

Roger Mitchell asked about work done at Briceburg on the Merced River. Bill Haigh said BLM was able to get road work and other projects done using American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds.

Steve Koretoff said he knows Forest Service-certified sawyers and asked if BLM would be interested in using them as volunteers. Bill Haigh said they should contact Brian Mulhollen, the BLM Mother Lode fuels management specialist.

Jim Haagen-Smit asked about the status of Date Flat. Bill Haigh said the area is closed to off-highway vehicle use and gates have been installed. BLM is looking at the area for possible equestrian or mountain bike use.

Jim Haagen-Smit noted Alan Ehrgott, director of the American River Conservancy, received a Sierra Business Council Vision Award this year.

## **HOLLISTER FIELD OFFICE**

### **Fort Ord**

Leigh Marymor asked what plants were coming in after ice plant is killed. Rick Cooper said the ice plant decays and native plants are coming in from seeds in the soil.

Fort Ord Reuse Authority, which represents the local community, has proposed designating Fort Ord as a National Conservation Area under the National Landscape Conservation System. Carl Twisselman asked why the local residents support the idea. Rick Cooper said that community believed the designation would enhance the appeal for tourism which is a big part of the local economy.

Roger Mitchell asked about ordnance cleanup at Fort Ord. Rick Cooper said BLM, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Army and California's Department of Toxic Substances Control have agreed to a cleanup plan. Areas with low amounts of ordnance will be cleaned to a high level to allow public access. Areas with high densities of ordnance will receive a lower level of cleanup and the public will not be allowed.

BLM also is working with the Army on preserving the military history of Fort Ord. BLM is looking at interpretive displays at different training sites such as a grenade training area.

Steve Koretoff said Ord historically has had a lot of motorized use. BLM should consider maintaining a small road network for public access to scenic vistas. He stated this will be important for visitors who may not be capable of hiking or biking long distances.

### **Other**

Rick Cooper provided an update on potential land acquisitions for San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard and giant kangaroo rat habitat. Reb Monaco said he had heard there might be problems with a proposed solar project on private land in the area and would BLM be interested in this land. Rick Cooper said BLM might be interested if the solar project is dropped.

Rick Cooper said BLM anticipates getting the Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement for Clear Creek Management Area out in mid-May with a decision in September. BLM is reviewing a risk assessment commissioned by the state OHV Division. The report finds a lower level of risk than an EPA report and says there should be additional study.

BLM also is proceeding with a mineral withdrawal for Clear Creek. There are less than dozen mining claims in the area and only one active mine on public land. Most of the mineral interest is gem collection and rock hounding.

Jon McQuiston asked if there are strategic minerals at Clear Creek. Rick Cooper said a mineral report will be developed which will identify any strategic minerals of importance. In addition to

asbestos and mercury, the only other minerals of strategic interest known are low grade chromite and nickel.

Rick Cooper said BLM and the Pacific Grove Museum have signed a memorandum of understanding to work together on educational activities for the California Coastal National Monument.

The environmental assessment for an oil and gas lease in southern Monterey and Fresno counties was released April 1, 2011. The lease is the first in California to be offered under the new onshore leasing policy. Some local residents have opposed drilling in the area. A lease in the area was postponed in 2009 after concerns were expressed about public notification. Under the new policy, split estate landowners with federal mineral estate proposed for leasing must be notified early in the lease process.

Paul McFarland asked who has regulatory authority for surface issues on split estate. Rick Cooper said that BLM has regulatory authority for oil and gas development on split estate lands. Any federal actions would be analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Rick Cooper said BLM has received funding from the Torch/Irene oil spill mitigation fund to develop a Seabird Protection Network similar one developed by USFWS from Point Reyes to Pt Sur. Bakersfield and Hollister offices are working with local law enforcement and state parks on developing a seabird protection network from Pt Sur to Pt Mugu.

Rick Cooper reported that the Hollister Office is requesting Land and Water Conservation Fund money to obtain habitat for threatened and endangered species habitat in the Panoche-Coalinga ACEC.

Carl Twisselman asked if there is a formula for distributing LWCF funds. Rick Cooper said each project goes through a review and is rated. The Panoche-Coalinga ACEC landscape rated high due to the presence of endangered species.

Carl Twisselman said he doesn't like to see a net loss of private land. Jon McQuiston said he agreed due to the loss of revenue for local government.

Rick Cooper said the strategy would be for BLM to purchase property with the highest habitat value and protect habitat in a core area with conservation easements.

## **BISHOP FIELD OFFICE**

Kathy Hardy provided the Bishop update on behalf of Bernadette Lovato. BLM is looking at a vegetation management strategy for the Bodie Hills that would treat 15,000 acres over 10 years. The area hasn't had a fire in years and BLM is concerned about a catastrophic fire that would destroy sage grouse habitat. The Taylor Fire last year burned 600 acres. There have been concerns expressed about the amount of proposed vegetation manipulation. Other Bodie issues of public interest are possible mining and designation of the Wilderness Study Area as Wilderness.

BLM is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for proposed expansion of geothermal production near Mammoth.

BLM is preparing NEPA documents for grazing leases. Some have been appealed. BLM is trying to finish the decision by June 1 for a sheep grazing allotment that potentially could interfere with bighorn sheep.

The local air quality district is looking at ways to reduce dust in the Keeler Dunes area. Some of the dust comes off the dunes. Steve Koretoff commented it doesn't seem cost effective to create a shallow lake for dust control.

Kathy Hardy handed out information on BLM's work on sage grouse habitat that is also listed on the BLM Bishop website.

### **BAKERSFIELD FIELD OFFICE**

The RAC was given written updates on Bakersfield projects:

#### **Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sales:**

Most federal oil and gas development in California occurs within approximately 590,000 acres of public land and 450,000 acres of mineral estate administered by the BLM Bakersfield Field Office.

Environmental Assessment documents are initiated prior to offering parcels for competitive lease auction. Bakersfield has an interdisciplinary team for conducting those documents, and has been successful in completing those documents on time without any conflicts from the public.

The Bakersfield Field Office will conduct an oil and gas lease auction on June 8, 2011 at the Marriott Hotel 801 Truxtun Ave., Bakersfield. The room will open at 8 a.m. to allow bidders to register and obtain a bid number. The competitive oral auction will begin at 9 a.m. We will offer a total of 5 parcels for a total of 1,523 of public lands in Kern County. Results will be available in the afternoon on June 9.

An Environmental Assessment document has been initiated for a December 8, 2011 lease auction. This document is in the preliminary stage, and not yet available for public comments.

Our last two competitive lease auctions were successful. We offered a total of 11 parcels, 5,622 acres in Kern County for total revenue of \$2,174,647.00 including administrative fees.

#### **Bakersfield Resource Management Plan**

The Bakersfield Resource Management Plan (RMP) encompasses about 404,000 surface acres of public lands and an additional 766,000 acres of federal mineral estate scattered throughout eight counties in central California (Kings, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Tulare, Ventura, Madera, eastern Fresno, and western Kern Counties). This Plan will not include lands in the Carrizo Plain National Monument and the California Coastal National Monument.

Public lands within the planning area are currently being managed under the 1997 Caliente RMP and the 1985 Hollister RMP, as well as the RMPs covering lands within the California Coastal National Monument (September 2005) and the Carrizo Plain National Monument (April 2010).

**Purpose and Need for the Bakersfield RMP:**

- The purpose of this RMP is to establish goals, objectives, and management actions for BLM public lands that address current issues, knowledge, and conditions.
- There is a need to provide management direction for lands acquired since the 1997 Caliente RMP:
  - Portions of Madera and eastern Fresno counties including the San Joaquin River Gorge that were transferred from Folsom to Bakersfield Field Offices;
  - Piedras Blancas Historic Light Station Outstanding Natural Area;
  - Naval Petroleum Reserve 2 (NPR 2). NPR2 has an oil and gas plan amendment, but other management decisions are needed;
  - Atwell Island Project, which was acquired under the auspices of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act.
- Update the analysis of impacts relative to air quality, climate change, and threatened and endangered species.
- Address travel management through evaluating opportunities and designating routes.
- Facilitate contributions of public lands to energy development (both renewable sources and oil and gas), as well as updating the reasonable foreseeable development (RFD) scenario and analyze the impacts of this development of these resources.

**Public Notice, Scoping, and Cooperating Agencies:**

The Notice of Intent to prepare a revision to the Caliente RMP was published in March 2008.

The BLM held seven Open House and public scoping meetings in Bakersfield (2 meetings), Taft, Lake Isabella, Fresno, Three Rivers, and San Luis Obispo during April 2008. A total of 84 people registered their attendance at these meetings.

The BLM mailed a total of 1,674 letters to potentially interested parties to inform them of the planning process.

The BLM received a total of 142 separate pieces of correspondence (letters, emails, and comment forms) from various agencies, individuals, and/or special interest groups, which included 725 comments regarding the RMP.

The BLM sent out invitations to 15 federal, state, and local agencies to join the planning process as cooperating agencies. California Department of Fish and Game and the National Park Service requested to stay involved.

A letter consulting with all eight federally recognized Native American tribes as well several unrecognized Native American tribes, groups, and individuals inviting participation in the planning process was sent on April 4, 2008.

**Planning Issues:**

**Issue 1:** Adequately address the need for access to and continued availability of, public lands for multiple recreational uses and open spaces.

**Issue 2:** Establish a balance between the extent of the travel network and protection of natural and cultural resources including an appropriate allocation of routes to the various modes of transport.

**Issue 3:** Ensure appropriate protection for Threatened and Endangered species, critical habitat, and other biological resources in a multiple-use environment.

**Issue 4:** Continue to appropriately manage livestock grazing to provide for economic benefit, rural lifestyles and vegetation management while protecting other resources.

**Issue 5:** Balance the demand for energy development (including oil and gas, wind, and solar energy) and other land use authorizations (such as road and transmission corridor right-of-ways) with other resource values.

**Issue 6:** Address the impacts of climate change on the management of public lands including strategies that will reduce impacts and incorporation of appropriate monitoring.

**Plan Alternatives:** The following five alternatives were developed to respond to the purpose and need for the revision and resolve the comments received through the public scoping process.

Resource or Resource Use	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Preferred)	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E
Biological Resources	Designate 11 ACECs and 10 special areas to protect biological resources	Designate 16 ACECs and manage 11 additional areas to protect biological resources	Designate 20 ACECs and manage 8 additional areas to protect biological resources		Designate 12 ACECs and manage 15 additional areas to protect biological resources
Wild Lands	No areas were designated as Wild Lands	Designate 3,470 acres in 6 areas as Wild Lands	Designate 17,800 acres in 13 areas as Wild Lands		Designate 0 acres as Wild Lands
Wildland Fire Ecology and Management	Response to wildland fire can range from monitoring to intensive suppression actions Implement the full range of fuels management practices: Rx fire, mechanical, etc.				
	Allow natural ignitions to be managed for resource benefit within the Domeland Wilderness Area.	Allow for the option of using wildland fire to function in its natural ecological role within the following Fire Management Units: Domeland, Three Rivers, and South Sierra. Where safe and conditions allow, manage fire to restore and maintain the natural fire regime.			
Lands & Realty (including Renewable Energy)	Increase management efficiency through adjusting land tenure	Generally retain federal ownership of BLM managed lands with important public or resource values			
	Consider all mineral estate lands (split estate lands) under BLM jurisdiction potentially suitable for disposal	Consider for disposal any nonleased mineral estate with low to moderate oil and gas and geothermal potential	Nonleased mineral estate with low to moderate oil and gas and geothermal potential may be considered for disposal		Only mineral estate with no potential for oil and gas or geothermal would be considered for disposal
	ROW Avoidance = 0 ac ROW Exclusion = 0 acres	ROW Avoidance = 128,130 ac ROW Exclusion = 121,300 ac	ROW Avoidance = 158,050 ac ROW Exclusion = 151,410 ac		ROW Avoidance = 96,210 ac ROW Exclusion = 121,300 ac
	Renewable energy not specifically addressed.	Utility scale renewable energy development is excluded from ACECs, SRMAs, NLCS units, and VRM Class I & II areas.			
Livestock Grazing	Available = 314,600 ac Unavailable = 61,200 ac Unallocated = 26,900	Available = 336,500 ac Unavailable = 66,200 ac	Available = 330,000 ac Unavailable = 72,700 ac	Available = 0 ac Unavailable = 402,700 ac	Available = 353,600 ac Unavailable = 49,100 ac
Oil & Gas	<u>Open for leasing:</u> Total = 1,016,270 ac Std terms & conditions = 304,080 ac Major Constraints = 707,280 ac No Surface Use = 4,910 ac <u>Closed for leasing:</u> 158,850 acres	<u>Open for leasing:</u> Total = 1,003,830 ac Major Constraints = 999,950 ac No Surface Use = 3,880 ac <u>Closed for leasing:</u> 162,260 acres	<u>Open for leasing:</u> Total = 974,560 ac Major Constraints = 966,160 ac No Surface Use = 3,880 ac <u>Closed for leasing:</u> 196,050 acres		<u>Open for leasing:</u> Total = 1,016,600 ac Major Constraints = 1,013,010 ac No Surface Use = 3,590 ac <u>Closed for leasing:</u> 158,850 acres
Recreation	1 Special Recreation Management Area	3 Special Recreation Management Areas	2 Special Recreation Management Areas		4 Special Recreation Management Areas



<b>Travel Management</b>	OHV Area Designations: Open = 0 acres Closed = 139,490 acres Limited = 264,590 acres	OHV Area Designations: Open = 0 acres Closed = 142,940 acres Limited = 261,140 acres	OHV Area Designations: Open = 0 acres Closed = 166,300 acres Limited = 237,780 acres	OHV Area Designations: Open = 70 acres Closed = 136,280 acres Limited = 264,560 acres
	Route designations: Motorized: 1895 miles Nonmotorized: 0 miles Nonmechanized: 41 mi Authorized: 0 miles Closed: 0 miles	Route designations: Motorized: 770 miles Nonmotorized: 31 miles Nonmechanized: 45 mi Authorized: 783 miles Closed: 308 miles	Route designations: Motorized: 656 miles Nonmotorized: 39 miles Nonmechanized: 45 miles Authorized: 617 miles Closed: 580 miles	Route designations: Motorized: 1,683 miles Nonmotorized: 31 miles Nonmechanized: 45 mi Authorized: 112 miles Closed: 65 miles
<b>Wild &amp; Scenic Rivers</b>	Identified 8 river segments eligible for designation	Find 2 eligible segments of river as suitable and recommend for designation	Find all 8 eligible segments of river as suitable and recommend for designation	Find all eligible segments of river as not suitable and recommend none for designation

### **Preferred Alternative (Alternative B):**

#### **Land Use:**

- Opens approximately 999,950 acres to fluid mineral (Oil and gas) leasing of which 154,760 acres have high development potential; approximately 3,880 acres would be open subject to No Surface Use stipulations.
- Approximately 123,430 acres would be available for renewable energy projects;
- Provides for continuation of livestock grazing on 336,500 acres, includes prescriptions for livestock grazing to improve/maintain wildlife habitat on 7,800 acres at Atwell Island;

#### **Recreation Management:**

- Designates in three Special Recreation Management Areas (45,240 acres total) – Keyesville, San Joaquin River Gorge, & Temblor Range, which provide a range of recreation settings and opportunities;
- North Fork of the Kaweah River – limited to day-use only and closed from May 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup>;
- Closes 11,420 acres to public access – principally for public safety in highly developed oil fields;

#### **Trail and Travel Management:**

- OHV Area designations: 0 acres as Open use; 261,140 acres as Limited use; 142,940 acres as Closed;
- Trail and Route designations: Motorized = 770 miles; Authorized Use Only = 783 miles; Closed = 308 miles;

#### **Biological Resources:**

- Maintains or enhances approximately 294,840 acres that contain notable assemblages of important habitats, unique biological resources, and rare species that contribute toward regional conservation efforts and the preservation of native habitat for future generation; including protection of 44% of the federally listed species known or with potential to occur in the Decision Area through special management in ACECs.
- Includes actions to minimize impacts on biological resources including: standard operating procedures for BLM actions and authorizations, permits for collecting vegetation in sensitive areas, special stipulations for oil and gas leases in specific areas, closing areas to mineral material sales, and restricting recreational opportunities (camping, campfires, hunting, shooting sports, and seasonal closures).

**Special Designations:**

- Designates 3,470 acres as Wild Lands for the protection of their wilderness characteristics, in addition to the 120,800 acres of designated wilderness area and almost 21,000 acres of WSA;
- Designates a total of 99,620 acres in 17 areas as ACECs to protect relevant and important wildlife, plants and plant communities, historic and cultural, paleontological, and unique geological resources.
- Provides overarching guidance for management at Piedras Blancas Historic Light Station ONA
- Makes suitable findings for two segments of Wild and Scenic Rivers (North Fork of the Kaweah and San Joaquin River Segment 1); recommends designation.

**Next Steps:**

- August 2011: NOA published in Federal Register; Draft RMP/Draft EIS available to Public, 90-day Comment Period Begins
- November 2011: Public Comment Period Ends
- April 2012: NOA for Proposed RMP/Final EIS published in Federal Register
- September 2012: Record of Decision signed

**Painted Rock Parking Area and Trail Project****Deferred Maintenance Project**

Work was completed on resurfacing the access road into the Painted Rock Parking area and trail, re-contouring the parking area and developing an additional parking area for overflow parking. The parking area at the trail head was greatly improved! Parking areas were defined, the picnic area was resurfaced which made it handicap assessable and the area was leveled which makes it more usable. These improvements make the area a show case for the Monument.





### **Recruitment/Diversity Project**

The Bakersfield Field Office has initiated a project to create a partnership with Cal State University Bakersfield's College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) to help with recruitment and mentorship of "at risk" students. The CAMP provides a unique educational program that helps students from migrant and seasonal farm worker backgrounds to succeed in college. Many of the students in the CSUB CAMP are from a community with low participation rates in several job series. As California becomes increasingly diverse, BLM CA will need to increase its outreach and recruitment efforts to minority populations to remain relevant and to employ a workforce reflective of the communities in which we serve.

This project seeks to provide a pilot program for Hispanic students interested in careers with the Bureau of Land Management. Through a previously funded proposal under the Executive Orders Program, the BLM CA hired a student provided by the CSU, Sacramento CAMP. This CAMP student did an excellent job throughout her term and was hired as a temporary employee once the term for the program ended. She is expected to be converted to a SCEP position shortly. Under the current proposal, we anticipate building upon the success of our program by creating a program which can carry on in subsequent years, as a State Initiative, provided funding is available.

The purpose of the proposed partnership with the CSUB's CAMP is to increase BLM's exposure to communities with low participation rates. Future demographic trends (census website) show a marked increase in the percentage of individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic. As our population increases in diversity, we need to outreach to and recruit from those populations in order to employ a workforce reflective of those we serve. Additionally, research shows a consistent relationship between visitation of public lands and support for conservation (Sheffield, 2008). Introducing minorities to the Bureau, our mission and the opportunities to recreate, etc. on public land will hopefully increase future support for BLM projects amongst a growing demographic population.

We are currently requesting funding through the Executive Orders Program for three summer positions (Petroleum Engineering Technician, Physical Science Technician, and GIS

Specialist). We hope a partnership will match BLM with highly talented students to help us achieve our mission, while providing them an experience they can learn and build from.

**SUBJECT:** Element Power – Great Valley Solar Project at Atwell Island CACA-51812

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Great Valley Solar Project is a 150MW Photovoltaic Solar Project, located on approximately 1,500 acres of BLM managed public lands, two miles south of Alpaugh, CA. Element Power, LLC filed an application for this project to the Bakersfield Field Office on April 4, 2010, and an amended application on August 9, 2010. The initial POD was released September 23, 2010 and has since undergone several minor revisions.

The land selected for this site is within the Atwell Island Management Area and is former agricultural land taken out of production by the Central Valley Project Improvement Act Land Retirement Program (CVPIA-LRP). Prior attempts by BLM to rehabilitate this land for non-agricultural uses consistent with the program's objectives proved unsuccessful due to the depleted mineral composition of the soils.

Because Atwell Island is managed under a cooperative agreement between BLM, BOR and FWS and the parcels identified for this site were acquired using BOR CVIPA funding, these agencies will be involved with the NEPA environmental review process. Element Power is currently requesting proposals for NEPA contractors and has hired a consultant to conduct cultural and biological site surveys for Spring and Summer 2011. The Caliente RMP affecting this resource area does not specifically address renewable energy development, but a provision in the plan allowing for oil and gas development could serve as the basis of permitting solar through a Documentation of NEPA Adequacy (DNA). It is unlikely that the revised Bakersfield RMP currently under development will be completed in time to serve as the plan for this project. The target construction date is early 2013.

The BLM California State Office has taken the initial lead on this project, since proposed development of donated and acquired lands requires State Director authorization under IM CA-2009-020. The State Director was briefed on this project and advised Element Power to contact BOR, FWS and third-party NGO's involved with acquisition of the parcels to gauge their response to the idea of developing this site for solar energy use. A site visit with the applicant, BLM, BOR and FWS is scheduled for April 12, 2011.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mike Damaso referenced an Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division of California State Parks independent report analyzing naturally occurring asbestos exposures associated with motorcycle riding and hiking in Clear Creek Management Area. He said the EPA health assessment risk study was not done properly. The report commissioned by the OHV Division showed a tenfold lower level of health risk. He has personal experience in Clear Creek and there is not the risk shown in the EPA report.

OHV areas are being closed in addition to Clear Creek. The BLM Mother Lode Field Office does not have any areas open to OHV use and Hollister also closed the Panoche area to OHV use. Forest Service travel management plans are reducing the areas open to OHV use and the overall result is remaining trails are being overused and destroyed.

Walt Pachucki and Paul McFarland asked about the amount of green sticker funds BLM receives from the OHV Division.

Hugh Brady, a rock hound, said closing areas like Clear Creek limit public use because some people are limited in how far they can walk. Access is needed to help build support for public lands with the next generation.

Amy Granat said motorized recreation is more than noisy dirt bikes. It also includes vehicles operated by hunters, fishermen and other recreationists. Elderly and disabled people don't have access to areas closed to motorized recreation. BLM has an internal bias against motorized recreation.

The EPA study was slanted with 13 dry samples and 3 wet samples. There is scientific uncertainty shown by the difference between the EPA and OHV Division studies, so the EPA report should be used as a basis for the RMP. OHV users, like mountain climbers, should be able to use an area if they assume the risk.

Steve Koretoff referred to federal memorandums on scientific integrity. Due to the significant differences between the studies, BLM should stop the process and revisit the EIS. EPA lacks the scientific expertise of research scientists.

There are questions in the scientific community about fiber length; fibers look similar to amphibole, but aren't. He referenced a paper on the issue in American Mineralogist Volume 96 page 690. Based on the standard used at Clear Creek, federal buildings in Washington, D.C., should be evacuated. Naturally occurring asbestos is so widespread it can be found in the soil anywhere in the United States.

Steve Koretoff made a motion that the RAC recommend that BLM stop the Clear Creek RMP process until the public and agencies have the time to review the scientific data.

Carl Twisselman said Clear Creek was the second issue to come before the RAC when it was formed 16 years ago.

Jim Haagen-Smit asked if BLM planned to review the studies before proceeding with the RMP.

Rick Cooper said the OHV Division report is being reviewed by EPA and the state Department of Toxic Substances Control. There was no significant difference in fiber counts between the OHV Division samples and the EPA samples gathered during wet weather.

He said the proposed final plan is about done and the OHV Division will review it before release.

Steve Koretoff moved and Roger Mitchell seconded a motion that the RMP not be sent to Washington, D.C., before the science receives peer review and BLM discusses it with the OHV Division.

The motion failed to gather a majority in member categories 2 and 3, so failed.

## **APRIL 9**

Note: As of Friday evening, it appeared the federal government would close at midnight due to lack of a budget, so BLM agreed to allow members who wished to go home. A budget resolution passed late Friday night after some members had departed.

**RAC:** Leigh Marymor, Roger Mitchell, Jon McQuiston, Steve Koretoff, Mary Gorden.

**BLM:** Kathy Hardy, Bill Haigh, Rick Cooper, David Christy.

**PUBLIC:** Amy Leska, Barbara Christy, Ed Tobin, Jim Holden, J.D. Shull, Wayne Wilsey, Parick McGaffney

RAC members thanked BLM staff and members of the public who hosted the Friday tour.

Jim Holden said gold miners used 5,000 pounds per day of mercury during the Gold Rush and long toms contain abandoned mercury. Only about 200 pounds have been recovered. The rest is in waterways.

Ed Tobin said he was a member of the RAC from 1995 to 2000 and is asking BLM to re-open Clear Creek. The area, one of the top 10 in the nation, has been closed for three years. The OHV Division study showed riding in Clear Creek for five days presents less risk than smoking one cigarette a year. EPA's report was driven by an agenda to close Clear Creek and EPA's scientific integrity is questionable.

In addition to the EPA and OHV Division studies, there was one prepared by BLM focused on employee exposure. It showed employees could patrol on a motorcycle 44 days or in a vehicle 111 days annually without exceeding OSHA standards.

When OHV users presented information to the San Benito County Board of Supervisors, supervisors voted to re-open county roads in the area.

BLM has eliminated parking in the closed area and reduced the number of campsites at Oak Flat from 40 to 16

Adaptive management was not done with the San Benito evening primrose. The BLM Hollister botanist has found an expanded range for the primrose and it may be de-listed.

The health studies show exposure is related to soil moisture, so BLM should revise its wet weather closure criteria.

BLM is ripping trails that have been used for a long time and should stop trail rehabilitation until the agency has consulted with the OHV community. BLM should revisit the route designation process. A BLM botanist is a member of a group that sued BLM.

BLM has constructed a decontamination facility by a contaminated road and contaminated creek. He took samples of the road surface and they contain amphibole fibers.

Jim Holden asked about state regulations.

Kathy Hardy said the state manages wildlife and BLM manages habitat. Some oversight is delegated to state agencies by federal agencies.

Patrick McCaffree said he is concerned fire protection is not a priority, with fuel growing on BLM parcels.

Bill Haigh said the BLM Mother Lode office is rotating around the area with fuels projects. Crews are working in Mariposa County this year. BLM works with fire safe councils and other agencies, but has limited funding for fuels work.

Leigh Marymor said partnerships improve the chances of getting funding. Bill Haigh said BLM has been working with the Amador-Calaveras Consensus and is cooperating on getting a grant for the Yosemite -Stanislaus Solutions group.

Steve Koretoff asked if homeowners could remove fuel on adjoining BLM lands. Bill Haigh said there is a variance program that allows adjacent landowners to remove fuel. BLM has worked to streamline the process by practices such as including three years worth of fuels work in one EA for the Glencoe area.